

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
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-----058370 311423Z /43

R 301704Z MAR 78

FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1961  
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMCONSUL OPORTO  
COMUSFORAZ  
USCINCEUR  
CINCLANT

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 3 PONTA DELGADA 0214

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PO  
SUBJECT: MOTA AMARAL SPEAKS FRANKLY ABOUT THE FLA, AUTONOMY  
AND INDEPENDENCE

REF: PONTA DELGADA 0190(DTG 220025Z MAR 78); PONTA DELGADA 0200  
(DTG 251215Z MAR 78)

SUMMARY: DURING THE COURSE OF A RELAXED AND CANDID CONVERSATION ON MARCH 23, AZOREAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (RGA) PRESIDENT DR. JOAO BOSCO MOTA AMARAL TOLD AMCONSUL THAT THE PERSONS CONTROLLING THE AZOREAN LIBERATION FRONT (FLA) WERE LINKED CLOSELY TO RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS ON THE CONTINENT WHOSE ULTIMATE AIM WAS NOT AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE BUT THE FOMENTING OF INSTABILITY THAT WOULD LEAD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

A  
RIGHT-WING MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN PORTUGAL. MOTA AMARAL SAID INDEPENDENCE FOR THE AZORES NOW WAS UNVIEABLE ECONOMICALLY AND IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE POLITICALLY. HIS OWN AIM WAS TO DEVELOP AUTONOMY ALONG THE BERMUDIAN MODEL, WHICH WOULD LEAVE THE AZORES NEITHER POLITICALLY INDEPENDENT FROM NOR ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT UPON CONFIDENTIAL

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PORUGAL. END SUMMARY.

1. FLA LINKS TO MAINLAND RIGHTISTS: MOTA AMARAL SAID THE FLA WAS FINANCED AND CONTROLLED BY WEALTHY RIGHT-WING AZOREANS WITH SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS INTERESTS IN CONTINENTAL PORTUGAL THAT THEY WISH TO SAFEGUARD

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AND WHO MAINTAINED CLOSE LINKS TO MAINLAND RIGHTIST ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING MIRN. THIS CONTROLLING GROUP'S PRIMARY GOAL WAS NOT INDEPENDENCE FOR THE AZORES BUT IN FOMENTING INSTABILITY IN THE REGION. ULTIMATELY THEY HOPED TO SEIZE UPON AZOREAN AND MAINLAND UNREST AS A PRETEXT FOR A RIGHTIST MILITARY COUP IN PORTUGAL. AS PROOF, HE RECALLED THAT MANY OF THE RIGHTISTS IN FLA SO VOCIFEROUSLY DEMANDING INDEPENDENCE TODAY HAD PRIOR TO THE 25TH OF APRIL DECLARED UNSWerving LOYALTY TO AN INDIVISIBLE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE. HE POINTED OUT THAT A RIGHTIST MILITARY GOVERNMENT, BY DEFINITION CENTRALIST, WOULD MOVE QUICKLY TO CRUSH REGIONAL AUTONOMY ALTOGETHER. WHILE FLA "LEADER" JOSE DE ALMEIDA HIMSELF WAS, PERHAPS, A SINCERE "INDEPENDENTISTA", HE WAS NOT HIS OWN MAN AND WOULD BE CAST ASIDE BY HIS MENTORS IF HE WERE PERCEIVED TO BE BREAKING FREE OF THEIR CONTROL

2. FLA INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS DISCOUNTED: MOTA AMARAL CLAIMED THAT JOSE DE ALMEIDA HAD NO MEANINGFUL CONTACTS WITH ANY WESTERN GOVERNMENT.

HIS ONLY INTERNATIONAL TIES WERE WITH RIGHT-WING FRINGE GROUPS IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, IN ADDITION TO ADVENTURERS, OPPORTUNISTS AND OTHER DISREPUTABLE TYPES WHO HOPED TO EXPLOIT AN INDEPENDENT AZORES FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. THE PHOENIX FOUNDATION WAS ONE SUCH EXAMPLE.

3. FLA ACTIVITIES DAMAGE AUTONOMY PROSPECTS: MOTA AMARAL EMPHASIZED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT FLA THREATS OF VIOLENCE COULD ONLY HURT PROSPECTS FOR AUTONOMY. FAR FROM ENCOURAGING LISBON TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING, SUCH EXCESSES ONLY

SERVED TO FOSTER SUSPICIONS OF MAINLAND SOCIALIST PARTY AND MILITARY LEADERS THAT THE GRANTING OF MORE SELF-RULE TO THE REGION WOULD FUEL FURTHER LOCAL DEMANDS FOR TOTAL INDEPENDENCE. MOREOVER, IF THE SEPARATISTS WERE EVER FOOLHARDY ENOUGH TO ATTEMPT AN ARMED UPRISING, HE HAD NO DOUBTS THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ONLY SEND TROOPS TO CRUSH THE EFFORT BUT ALMOST CERTAINLY END THE REGION'S EXPERIMENT IN AUTONOMY. HE BELIEVED THAT THE BEST MEANS FOR THE REGION TO WIN CONCESSIONS ON AUTONOMY FROM A SKEPTICAL GOP WOULD BE TO

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PROJECT AN IMAGE OF STABILITY COUPLED WITH A UNITED  
POLITICAL FRONT. SUCH UNITY HAD NOT EXISTED IN THE REGION SINCE THE  
SUMMER OF 1975.

4. MOTA AMARAL FAVORS LEGALIZATION OF SEPARATIST PARTY: MOTA AMARAL  
WAS CONVINCED THAT THE SEPARATISTS REPRESENTED ONLY A RELATIVELY  
SMALL MINORITY. HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROHIBITION  
AGAINST REGIONAL PARTIES PREVENTED THE EMERGENCE OF A LEGAL SEPARATIS  
T  
POLITICAL ORGANIZATION THAT WOULD HAVE TO TEST ITSELF AT THE POLLS, T  
HE  
SEPARATISTS WERE ABLE TO PROJECT AN IMAGE CONSIDERABLY LARGER THAN  
THE REALITY. THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SEEK THE NECESSARY  
CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES TO PERMIT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATIST  
PARTY AS A MEANS OF UNMASKING OF THE RELATIVELY NARROW APPEAL OF THE  
SEPARATISTS.

5. INDEPENDENCE NOT VIABLE ECONOMICALLY: MOTA AMARAL VIEWED  
INDEPENDENCE FOR THE AZORES NOW AS SIMPLY NOT VIABLE ECONOMICALLY.  
THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS TRUE IF OVER THE PAST THIRTY YEARS THE  
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UNITED STATES HAD PAID FOR USE OF THE LAJES AIRBASE AND THESE FUNDS H  
AD  
BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION'S INFRASTRUCTURE. BUT  
THE COLD REALITY TODAY IS THAT THE REGION SUBSISTS ESSENTIALLY BY  
SELLING ITS MAIN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS - DAIRY PRODUCTS AND MEAT - TO  
A  
PROTECTED MARKET IN PORTUGAL AT ARTIFICIALLY HIGH PRICES. IF CUT OFF  
FROM THIS MARKET BY INDEPENDENCE, THE REGION'S ALREADY LOW STANDARD O  
F

LIVING WOULD DECLINE BY HALF.

6. NOR POLITICALLY: AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE WAS NOT FEASIBLE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL REASONS AS WELL. IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT ANY WESTERN POWER , AND PARTICULARLY A NATO NATION, WOULD BACK A SEPARATIST MOVEMENT AGAINST A FELLOW NATO ALLY. IT WAS EQUALLY INCONCEIVABLE THAT A COMMUNIST OR THIRD WORLD NATION WOULD SUPPORT A SEPARATIST MOVEMENT THAT BY THE VERY NATURE OF ITS LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS WAS DESTINED TO REMAIN UNABASHEDLY AND FERVENTLY ANTI-COMMUNIST.

7. LEFT-WING SEPARATISM A POTENTIAL DANGER: THERE WAS A REMOTE DANGER

THAT SOME RADICAL THIRD WORLD POWER LIKE LIBYA WOULD SUPPORT A LEFT-WING SEPARATIST MOVEMENT IF ONE WERE TO ARISE. IT WAS THIS PROSPECT, NOT THE FLA, THAT WORRIED LISBON AND MAY EXPLAIN THE GOP'S ALMOST "HYSTERICAL" REACTION TO COL. QADHAFI'S CALL FOR INDEPENDENCE OF THE ATLANTIC ISLANDS. WHILE SUCH A THREAT WAS NOT IMMINENT, HE ALLEGED THAT THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) WAS POURING LARGE SUMS OF MONEY INTO THE ARCHIPELAGO IN SUPPORT OF OSTENSIBLY INNOCUOUS GOOD WILL PROJECTS SUCH AS COOPERATIVES AND PURCHASING BOAT MOTORS FOR POOR FISHERMEN. THESE EFFORTS HAD BEEN WELL RECEIVED BY AN

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IMPOVERISHED POPULACE NOT GIVEN TO LOOKING GIFT HORSES IN THE MOUTH, AND COULD SPELL FUTURE TROUBLE.

8. MOTA AMARAL'S VISION FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE: A BERMUDA SOLUTION: IN RESPONSE TO A DIRECT QUESTION, MOTA AMARAL SAID THAT AS A FORSEEABLE GOAL HE FAVORED A "BERMUDA SOLUTION" FOR THE AZORES, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS AMPLE AUTONOMY IN WHICH THE REGION WOULD BE "NEITHER INDEPENDENT NOR DEPENDENT UPON PORTUGAL". UNDER THIS ARRANGEMENT, PORTUGAL WOULD PROVIDE SECURITY FOR THE ARCHIPELAGO AND DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION ABROAD AT NO COST TO THE REGION. VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT WOULD FALL UNDER REGIONAL CONTROL. PORTUGAL'S COMPENSATION WOULD BE CONTINUED SOVEREIGNTY. HOWEVER, THE AZORES HAD A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE SUCH A RELATIONSHIP WAS FEASIBLE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE REGION FIRST WOULD HAVE TO BECOME ECONOMICALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT.

9. A PARADOX: MOTA AMARAL SAW A PARADOX IN THE REGION'S PROGRESS TOWARD ECONOMIC AND FISCAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY. AS THAT GOAL WAS APPROACHED, HE ENVISIONED THOSE SAME MILITARY AND SOCIALIST

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CIRCLES NOW UNCOMFORTABLE WITH AUTONOMY BECOMING EVEN MORE CONCERNED THAT SUCH A PROCESS WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO INDEPENDENCE. BUT THAT WAS A CONTRADICTION WITH WHICH THE REGION WOULD HAVE TO LIVE.

10. ULTIMATE STATUS: MOTA AMARAL SAID HE HAD NO RIGID PRECONCEPTION OF WHAT SHOULD BE THE ULTIMATE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE AZORES. HE THOUGHT THAT THE "BERMUDA SOLUTION" WOULD SERVE THE REGION'S INTEREST BEST OVER THE LONG TERM AS WELL BUT HE WOULD LEAVE THAT QUESTION UP TO HIS SUCCESSOR. CERTAINLY HE FELT NO LIFE'S CALLING TO LEAD THE AZORES TO INDEPENDENCE. HE SAID HIS SENSE OF HUMOR AND DELIGHT AT SELF-CRITICISM DISQUALIFIED HIM FOR SUCH A ROLE.

11. COMMENT: IT IS HELPFUL TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE CONVERSATION WAS HELD. JOSE DE ALMEIDA HAD PRESENTED HIS "MANIFESTO" - WITH ITS PREPOSTEROUS THREAT OF ARMED UPRISING - ONLY DAYS BEFORE. MOTA AMARAL WAS ANNOYED AT THE SEPARATIST DOCUMENT'S IMPLICATION THAT THE RGA WAS NOT A LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AZOREAN PEOPLE, AND CONFIDENTIAL

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SOMEWHAT APPREHENSIVE THAT THE FLA LEADER'S STATEMENTS MIGHT PERSUADE LISBON TO HOLD BACK ON AUTONOMY AT THE VERY MOMENT WHEN ADVANCES SEEMED POSSIBLE.

12. IT IS, NONETHELESS, INSTRUCTIVE THAT IN PRIVATE -- AND HE MADE IT

CLEAR THAT HIS REMARKS SHOULD BE TREATED AS A KIND OF CONFESSION --  
MOTA AMARAL ESSENTIALLY AGREED WITH THE STANDARD SOCIALIST PARTY  
CHARGES THAT THE AZOREAN SEPARATIST MOVEMENT WAS BASICALLY A COVER  
FOR RIGHT-WINGERS SEEKING A MILITARY TAKEOVER ON THE MAINLAND, AND,  
MORE IMPORTANTLY IN THE AZOREAN CONTEXT, WHO WOULD ABANDON THE  
SEPARATIST FLAG WHEN THAT GOAL WAS ACHIEVED.

13. THIS ARGUMENT HAS VALIDITY, BUT ONLY TO A POINT. IT IS TRUE  
THAT WHEN THE FLA WAS FOUNDED  
IN 1975 DURING THE HEAT OF THE  
GONCALVISTA PERIOD, MANY OF ITS SUPPORTERS SAW THE ELIMINATION OF THE  
RED MENACE ON THE MAINLAND AS THE MAIN, IF UNSPOKEN, GOAL. A FEW OF  
THE MOVEMENT'S PRINCIPAL BACKERS STILL HARBOR DREAMS OF REESTABLISHING

A RIGHT WING GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE, HOWEVER, TO  
CHARACTERIZE THE FLA TODAY AS TOTALLY DOMINATED BY THESE INTERESTS.  
AS ONE SUPPORTER PUT IT, THE FLA HAS LONG SHED ITS "MINDELO" COMPLEX

-  
THAT OF HOPING TO USE THE AZORES AS A BASE FROM WHICH TO "SAVE"  
PORTUGAL. THE OVERWHELMING SENTIMENT OF THE SUPPORTERS OF THIS SMALL  
BUT ACTIVE MOVEMENT IS INDEPENDENCE AND NO LEADER COULD LONG SURVIVE  
IF FOR WHATEVER REASON HE WAS PERCEIVED TO ABANDON THAT OBJECTIVE.  
NONETHELESS, MOTA AMARAL'S COMMENTS INDICATE THAT CONTRARY TO  
ALLEGATIONS FROM SOME QUARTERS, HE DOES NOT SEE THE FLA AS A SILENT,  
TACTICAL ALLY WHOSE EXCESSES CAN SERVE TO GOAD LISBON TO MOVE FASTER  
ON AUTONOMY. IN FACT, THEY SUGGEST THAT JOSE DE ALMEIDA'S PRIVATELY  
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EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE RGA PRESIDENT WAS AT HEART AN  
"INDEPENDENTISTA" IS SUBSTANTIALLY MISPLACED.  
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## Message Attributes

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